SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR INTEGRATING OFF-LINE

RATINGS OF BUSINESSES WITH SEARCH ENGINES

ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

A computer program product is provided as a business rating system to rank business that are relevant to a given Internet search topic. Business ratings are stored in a ranking repository that can be optionally searched by the user along with a user-defined search engine query. The business ratings are compiled from off-line surveys provided for example by independent agencies and / or other off-line surveys obtained through web based rating services. The business ratings can optionally be compiled from on-line questionnaires attached to the search engine results. The business ratings assess the quality of the businesses in terms of "interactive" criteria such as customer satisfaction, professionalism, and cost and ease of use of the businesses' products or services. The business rating system is comprised of an indexing engine, a query transformer, a search results transformer, a ranking based result sorter, an off-line ranking system, a metadata repository, and a ranking repository. The business rating system integrates the ratings with the search results, and ranks the search results based on such business ratings. In this manner, the user of a search engine receives

feedback from other users about businesses of interest. Eventually, businesses with higher ratings will be ranked at the top of the search list, while business with lower ratings will be ranked lower.